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ABSTRACT

The Oregon Council of Teachers of English and the Oregon Language Arts Association have worked together in recent years in attempting to meet the professional challenges faced by teachers of English and the language arts. Activities sponsored by these and other Oregon groups have included the establishment of inservice writing projects for teachers patterned after the Bay Area Writing Project; formation of a statewide advisory committee on composition; development of a language arts instructional guide for kindergarten through 12; and distribution of the National Council of Teachers of English "Statement on the Preparation of Teachers of English and the Language Arts" to English teachers and administrators in Oregon. Finally, funding has recently been provided for the creation of the Oregon Conference on English Education. This group has held its first meeting and has planned future programs that will give teacher educators the chance to meet and share professional concerns. (GW)

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Roger E. King
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MEETING THE PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE IN OREGON

or

HOW WE IN OREGON COLLABORATE

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By nature I am an optimist. I really do not believe that there are more professional challenges than we can ever hope to meet. The Statement on the Preparation of Teachers of English and the Language Arts speaks to "Changes in English and Teacher Education," "Changes in the Teaching Environment," and "Changes in the World at Large." I guess it's the accelerated rate of change that I find most disconcerting.

Did you read the December issue of "Learning" magazine? Let me share with you a few professional facts of that issue. 1. Nearly 1 in 3 teachers entered the profession within the past five years. 2. The average salary for a classroom teacher for '76-'77 was $13,397. 3. The median age of all teachers for 1961-76 was only 33. 4. The median years of experience was only eight. 5. The percentage of those teaching who were under 30 was 31.7%. 6. Fifty years and above 15.5%. There's a professional challenge for you: keeping experienced teachers! We seem to be preparing English teachers for relatively short professional careers.

Increasingly students, parents, teachers, administrators are turning to the courts and/or to the legislatures.

A circuit court jury awarded a student $12,500 based on his claim that a welding course taken at a junior college in Oregon didn't match the description in the catalogue. He wanted $25,000.

The last session of the Oregon legislature mandated that the preparation and certification of English teachers--all teachers--must include a demonstrated knowledge of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. In addition, English teachers--all

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teachers--must hold a red cross first aid card, by January 1, 1979. What's next? There's another challenge for you: coping with the courts and legislatures!

Well, now, what can we as English teachers do to further our profession in the face of insurmountable challenges? One thing we can do is to try to remain optimistic. There's hope. Remember that short 4-line poem titled "The Optimistic"?

> The Optimist fell ten stories
> And at each window bar
> He shouted to the folks inside
> Doing all right so far.

And we are doing all right so far! We are facing challenges; we are working together! We do have the Statement. WE ARE HERE, AREN'T WE?

Some of the primary areas of endeavor in Oregon for which the Oregon Council of Teachers of English and the Oregon Language Arts Association have assumed a high measure of support, interest, or direct responsibility are worth noting. Hopefully there will be some remarks that you will be able to use. Keep in mind an underlying crucial assumption of the NCTE Statement for pre-service and inservice education is this: an English teacher's preparation is life-long. An English teacher is always in the exciting process of becoming. Preservice and inservice ought to be one service.

The Oregon Council of Teachers of English and the Oregon Language Arts Association have what some would call a modern marriage. Some of the OLAA Executive Board members come to our OCTE meetings and visa versus. For the past few years we have been working together/collaborating on both state and regional meetings. In the fall OLAA assumes the leadership for fall conferences and in the spring OCTE assumes the leadership role. We will have three conferences this spring: one at the coast, central and eastern Oregon. We have found that both organizations serve best when they work together,

attempting to represent all grade levels, all geographic regions, all areas of language arts education. Every fall, every spring for the past few years OCTE and OLAA have joined hands for inservice workshops, seminars, sessions or conferences. Of course, each organization does its own thing, too!

1. Pat Stone from McNary High in Salem is the Director of the Oregon Writing Project, a project patterned after the Bay Area Writing Project, which provides teachers grades 1-14 the opportunity to learn a variety of approaches to teaching writing, to increase their knowledge about the writing process and to receive training for conducting inservice workshops. The inservice part of the program is now underway, and by the end of the school year, last summer's 57 participants will have given 114 inservice workshops.

2. Nat Teich, English Department, University of Oregon, is the project director for the University of Oregon '78 Oregon Writing Project. (Nat is on the Executive Board of OCTE.) With $5,000 from the U of O Autzen Foundation, plus a grant from NEH through the Bay Area Writing Project, there will be a 5-week institute which will include 25 teachers from throughout Oregon, again in a program modeled after the Bay Area Writing Project--teachers teaching teachers, teachers writing, teachers preparing for consulting. Each teacher will receive $500.00, be a U of O Writing Fellow, receive six hours of graduate credit while at the institute, and be trained to conduct two workshops in his/her home district.

3. Under Frank Ligon of Oregon State University, a State-wide Advisory Composition Committee, K-Adult came into being a few years ago as a response to the writing crisis, problems of waiver of credits, advanced placement, etc., at the junior college-college and university level. The 13 recommendations have been accepted by OSSHE. Items 7-11 ought to be of particular interest. Committee members are from public schools, private schools, jr. colleges and universities.

4. Frank Mazzio, the Language Arts Specialist of the Oregon Department of Education has produced a Language Arts Instruction K-12 field draft in collaboration with 12 English teachers from across the state. Goal-based planning, language arts program goals, skill areas, even a teacher self-evaluation check list, etc. have been included in this publication. When the field testing has been completed, the final instrument will be a valuable publication for language arts teachers.

What else are we doing in Oregon to meet the professional challenge through collaboration, through implementing NCTE Guidelines for preservice/inservice educational experiences? Well, the English Department at Oregon State University has provided at least 200 mimeographed copies of the Statement. Only of late has the cost for duplicating become a matter of concern. I've distributed copies to all members of OCTE and OLAA Executive Boards, as well as to a number of English teachers. I've sent copies to those at the Oregon Department of Education who share our concerns. What I've tried to do is to reach the professional leadership in Oregon and be certain each had a copy of the Statement.

However, other than doing the usual, I did write a grant proposal to the Dean of the Office of Undergraduate Studies, after I had met with him outlining my ideas for the substance of a first Oregon Conference on English Education. Of course, I had already spoken to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the dean of the School of Education.

The Oregon Conference on English Education may have been my creation. But without adequate funding the Conference as planned would not have become a reality. We do owe a debt of appreciation to the Office of Undergraduate Studies at OSU. Then, too, I found out later, land-grant monies may only be used for campus-based activities, and I did want to have a banquet off campus. Well, the Oregon Department of Education Basic Secondary Division provided all funds for the banquet off campus.

The English Department was again very supportive, providing the services

of a key secretary to act as the financial manager of the Conference, as well as several secretaries to assist with the necessary typing and mailing.

Neither the College of Liberal Arts nor the School of Education had any money to give to the Conference, but each dean had a very fine vocabulary of supportive words. They were supportive, though penniless. Penniless, too, was the office of Imogene Springer. Nevertheless, more important than money came an expression from Imogene of interest in and blessings for our efforts.

When the president of Oregon State University heard of our Conference and knew that the dean of the Office of Undergraduate Studies would not be available to greet the conferees, he invited himself to greet us and to welcome officially those outside the University to the first-ever Oregon Conference on English Education. Support from a president's office is hard to beat.

The grant proposal for $1,000.00 for a first Oregon Conference on English Education was approved. Last month on the 17th and 18th the highly successful Oregon Conference on English Education was held. At the Conference were representatives of 12 of the 14 institutions which prepare teachers of English, as well as members of the Oregon Department of Education and cooperating English teachers from five districts. An English department chairman who is also a cooperating English teacher came. The presidents of the Oregon Council of Teachers of English and the Oregon Language Arts Association attended, so, too, did the Director of the State-wide Composition Advisory Committee K-Adult. Also present was Tom Barton from Washington State University, English professor and member of the NCTE Standing Committee on teacher Preparation and Certification who was the ace facilitator, guide and discussion leader for the NCTE Statement on the Preparation of Teachers of English. Unfortunately, there was only so much money; only so many could be invited.

Each of the 22 Conference participants had received a copy of the Statement, along with other material, a few weeks prior to the Conference.

As a consequence Tom was able to discuss effectively for three hours or more the implications of the NCTE Statement. Tom underscored the "Crucial assumptions arrived at by reading the document," "Some examples of teacher preparation activities encouraged by the Statement," and "The how and where of English teacher preparation." I do have about 30 copies of Tom's notes that he made. I brought these with me to distribute, so that some of you, at least, will have a bit of the Oregon Conference on English Education for yourselves.

Some, though not all, of the goals for the Conference were reached. However, the closing moments of the Conference did bring a unanimous vote for establishing an Oregon Conference on English Education, having a direct affiliation with the Oregon Council of Teachers of English. Indeed, the motion for such action was made by the president of OCTE. We decided not to have either a chairman or president, rather I was chosen to be the convener-consultant.

An important result of the conference was meeting with each other, learning who we are, sharing professional concerns. Never before had we had such an opportunity.

A major focal point was an examination of the NCTE Statement.

A major decision was made: the establishing of an Oregon Conference on English Education.

As a consequence, the optimist, the convener-consultant, already has called for an Oregon Conference on English Education--in conjunction with a scheduled writing conference--for the 29th of April at the Inn of the Seventh Mountain in Bend. There we will pick up the threads of our last Oregon Conference on English Education as well as this Conference: meeting the professional challenge, working together, collaborating. Each of you is cordially invited. See you there!